

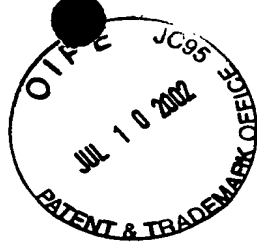
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Reconsideration of the present application, as amended, is respectfully requested. Prior to the entry of this response, claims 1, 3, 4, 6-9, 11, 12 and 14-18 were pending in this application. Upon entry of this response, claims 3, 4, 6-8, 11, 12 and 14-16 will be pending

In the Office Action mailed April 9, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S.P.N. 5,835,878 to Saito et al. ("the Saito '878 patent"). The Examiner also rejected claims 1, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S.P.N. 6,178,370 to Zierolf ("the Zierolf '370 patent"). The Examiner also objected to claim 16 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that claim would be allowable if re-written in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Examiner still further indicated that claims 3, 4 and 6-8 were allowable.

In response, the Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's rejections, but have canceled claims 1, 9, 17 and 18 without prejudice. The Applicants have also amended claims 11, 12, 14 and 15 to conform with allowed claims 3, 4, 6 and 7. As a result, the Applicants believe that, like claims 3, 4 and 6-8, claims 11, 12 and 14-16 are in condition for allowance, and such action by the Examiner is respectfully requested.

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**Conclusion**

For the reasons set forth above, the Applicants believe that claims 3, 4, 6-8, 11, 12 and 14-16 meet both the formal and substantive requirements for patentability, and that the application is in proper condition for allowance. Accordingly, such action by the Examiner is respectfully requested.

If a telephone conference would expedite allowance or resolve any additional questions, such a call is invited at the Examiner's convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald L. Sielagoski et al.

By Jeffrey M. Szuma  
Jeffrey M. Szuma  
Reg. No. 35,700  
Attorney for Applicant

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**BROOKS & KUSHMAN P.C.**  
1000 Town Center, 22nd Floor  
Southfield, MI 48075  
Phone: 248-358-4400  
Fax: 248-358-3351

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